



Reach for the Stars

and Other Advice for Life's Journey

and

Butterflies in My Stomach

and Other School Hazards

by Serge Bloch



STERLING Children's Books

Teacher's Guide

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NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Here are activities to try in your classroom, using some vivid, funny idioms from the book **Butterflies in My Stomach** and **Reach for The Stars**. You'll find that they fire up students' imaginations and inspire them to play with language. Use them to teach writing, art, creative thinking, even exercise!

Reach for the Stars Student Incentive!

The traditional **"gold star"** for good work is not only a wonderful incentive, it's a great way to illustrate the meaning of the book's title.

Have a week-long **"star search"** where the students earn stars for top work, good behavior, helping others, contributions in class—anything that shows they're striving to be the best.

Encourage them to try to succeed at things they may not have thought were possible.

At the end of the week, hold a little celebration party with star-shaped cookies!





Learning About Idioms

An idiom is a common expression that native speakers of a language use and understand, but that can't be figured out from the literal words themselves. Like the terms **"butterflies in my stomach," "a fish out of water,"** and **"shoot for the moon,"** the meaning has been passed down through time. Until your students become familiar with these colorful phrases, they might seem confusing...and amusing. You'll find this lesson plan will help!

Begin by reading the book, making sure that your students can see all the pictures, because so much of the humor is visual.

Discussion points:

1. What do you think it means to "be a fish out of water" or to "be a small fish in a big pond?" Have you ever felt that way? When?
2. Have you ever been "in the doghouse?" What did you do to get in trouble?
3. Think of a time when everything was "smooth sailing" for you, and another time when life was "a bumpy ride."
4. When things go well, we sometimes say we are "rolling in clover." How do you think it would feel to do that? What words would you use to describe that feeling?

For the bonus activity:

You may wish to come up with a list of fun words that will stimulate the students' imaginations and that they can use as they try to create their own idioms. Think of words that evoke feelings or strong visual images.



FORKS IN THE ROAD

You probably think you don't know what an idiom is—but you do! These phrases may seem crazy at first, but they each have a special meaning.



Try to figure out this one!

There's no silverware in the street! Does the word "fork" have another meaning, too?

Write a short paragraph that uses the phrase "fork in the road" and at least two other idioms you've learned.

Think about a difficult decision you might have to make. Maybe you have an important test to study for the next day, but also an invitation to a birthday party. **Draw a picture in the space below** of what a fork in the road might look like for **you**. Which would you choose, and why? Would you try to find "a middle road"?



There are thousands of different idioms. Look in a book of idioms or on the Internet to find:

1. A “colorful” idiom
2. An idiom that refers to food
3. An idiom that refers to the weather

Give the meaning of each one.

Bonus activity!

After looking at common idioms, try to make up your own or come up with a variation on one that already exists. For example, someone can be “green with envy.” But does a different color bring up a different emotion in you? This is your chance to use your imagination and shine! To see some examples of what other students have done, look at <http://www.idiomsbykids.com>.



Discussing Serge Bloch's Illustrations

Artist Serge Bloch's illustrations are unique because they combine expressive and lighthearted line drawings with actual photographs. The process results in a clever and entertaining mix of fantasy and realism.

This collage-like form is very inviting for children, especially those who are a bit intimidated by drawing freehand. Because they can begin constructing their picture with a favorite photograph or clipping from a magazine, kids will get a head start on their art! And they'll "feel like a million bucks" when they've finished.



ART CLASS

When you looked at the pictures in **Reach for the Stars**, you may have noticed something unusual about them: the art mixes drawings with photographs.

Not only that, but the drawings are what we call **“line drawings”** rather than realistic paintings. You might even think they’re a little like complicated stick figures, because they aren’t colored in!

But look again: can you tell what the character is feeling from his expressions and his body language?

1. Why do you think the artist chose to combine drawings and photographs in the same picture?
2. What effect do you think it has on the story?
3. **Try it yourself:** think of a picture you’d like to create—maybe one that shows what you did on your last birthday or on vacation. Maybe you’d like to show somewhere you want to visit or something you dream of doing. Then choose some of your favorite photos or clip some pictures from a magazine. Paste them on paper like a collage. Complete the picture by adding your own drawings.

(Be sure if you use any photographs that you make copies first!)





Greeting Cards

Because so many idioms describe feelings, wishes, and other emotions, many of these expressions are perfect for greeting cards or postcards:

Just think of these:

"I heard you were feeling under the weather."
for someone who is sick

"I'm sorry you're feeling so blue."
for someone who's feeling a little sad

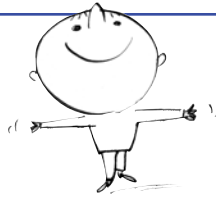
"Congratulations on making such a splash!"
for someone who's enjoyed a big success

On the following page is a sheet of expressions set in really fun fonts. Make a color photocopy for every student and have them use it in a card or postcard to send or give to someone special.

It's up to the student to create the design and picture to illustrate the expression. They can draw, use clippings, or even add photos for a truly personalized greeting.



Greeting Card Expressions



I'M SORRY YOU'RE FEELING BLUE.

Don't be down in the dumps.

Congratulations on making a splash!

YOU make ME feel LIKE a MILLION BUCKS.

I go bananas over you!

I heard you were under the weather.

No one can fill your shoes.

We're like two peas in a pod.

Let's CHILL OUT together.

I GOT YOUR BACK!

YOU AND I ARE BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

Don't worry, we're all in the same boat!

You're the APPLE of my EYE.

I'd bend over backwards for you.





Mix and Match!

Usually, when we play mix and match, we draw lines from one thing to another on the page. But here's a fun new way to play—and it's really active, so kids will get their exercise as they learn!

1. Use the activity page provided and cut along the dotted lines. Give each student a piece of paper, either with a picture of one of the idioms or with the written words.
2. Make sure you've cleared a space, so that everyone can move freely, without bumping into desks or chairs. You could even use the gymnasium, or go outdoors on a day when the weather is good.
3. When you say **"one, two, three, GO!"** let the games begin: All the students have to run around until they find their match and put the picture and the words together.
4. The first three pairs to match win first, second, and third prizes!



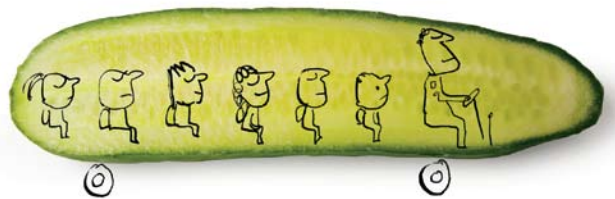
**There was a fork
in the road**



**She was a little
under the weather**



**He was in a
real pickle.**



**Are you ready to come
out of your shell?**



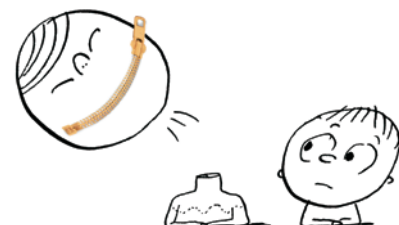
She was top banana.



**We are all in the
same boat.**



**She was laughing
her head off!**





IDIOM CHARADES

Let's play! Idiom charades is a variation on the popular game.

1. Use the activity page provided and make sure these are phrases that have been discussed in class.
2. Place the strips in a hat or a bowl.
3. Break the students up into groups and ask each team to choose a strip. Allow them a few minutes to think of how they might act out the idiom, and, if they'd like, even to draw a picture that will help them dramatize the phrase.
4. One by one, have the groups try to act out the idiom in front of the class while their classmates make guesses.



He has all of his ducks in a row.



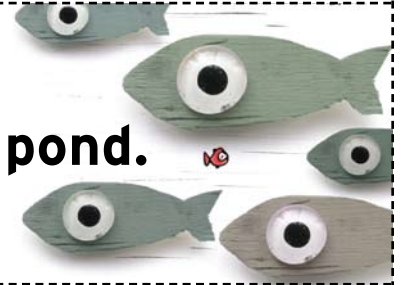
**She would bend over backwards
to help her friends.**



Has the cat got your tongue?



He feels like a small fish in a big pond.



Get back in the saddle!



He was on pins and needles.



**She marches to the beat
of a different drummer.**

